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# CONFERENCE *connection*

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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

December 1, 2019



## A Time for Reflection and Hope

The Season of Advent will be different for me this year. Traditionally, the Lectionary scriptures begin by lifting up the challenges of the world with its sense of darkness, into which the hope and light of Jesus enters on Christmas. My experiences recently add to the sense of darkness and heaviness - while longing for hope and light.

Two weeks ago UCC Conference Ministers & Executive Officers met for three days in Birmingham, AL with the purpose of connecting to what one



person described as "the holy places of our communal sin of racism." It was an intense experience.

[Read Char's full article on our website.](#)

## News from the Conference Office



### OCWM Books Close January 9, 2019

The Conference books for OCWM and special offerings for 2019 will close on January 9, 2020. For money to be counted for 2019 OCWM totals, the check **must be received by January 9** to PO Box 1950, Decatur GA 30031. Any checks received *after* January 9 will be put towards 2020 giving. This includes the Christmas Fund, One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, and Strengthen the Church Offerings.

Please make sure the checks are made out to the Southeast Conference with the fund written on the memo line. If you so desire, you can include all the offerings in one check, but please be sure to include a letter detailing what funds how the monies are allocated.

Although our Conference Budget runs October 1- September 30, our OCWM totals for individual churches run Jan 1-December 31. Thank you all for your generous support of the special offerings of the UCC and Our Churches Wider Missions.

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### From the Generosity Coordinator

In this season of Harvest and giving thanks, it is always important to remember that God is the greatest giver of ALL things. It is important that we continue to give and support all of God's children. Let's remember to **BLESS SOMEBODY ELSE!!** God is working in our lives, our churches, our communities and in this entire world.

In the spirit of giving, the following churches were awarded Transforming Churches, Transforming Lives Cycle 2, 2019 grant awards:



1. Safe Harbor Family UCC, Clinton, MS
2. Holy Trinity UCC, Nashville, TN
3. Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA
4. The Shalom Spiritual Center UCC, Snellville, GA (a spiritual community forming in the Atlanta area)

We are looking forward to working with these churches on these most important projects. Our next (spring) grant cycle will begin **January 15, 2020 and end on March 4, 2020**. Please check our website, SECUCC.ORG for applications and guidelines for completing the application.

We really appreciate all the ways that you continue to bless this conference with your time, talents and resources. It's been a great year thus far and it's not over. The harvest is truly plenteous and the laborers are few. Let's continue this work to ensure that this conference the BEST! We are grateful for all the ways you continue to bless this conference.

Please, continue to invite me to your church, together we make a difference. May you continue to be blessed during this season and every day.

Continued blessings, as we journey, TOGETHER,  
Min. Carrole Moss

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# Black Friday. Cyber Monday.

# #GIVINGTUESDAY

## December 3, 2019

### Giving Tuesday is December 3

The Tuesday after Thanksgiving has become a day in which people around the globe are encouraged and inspired to give to causes and issues that matter to them. Please consider these two possibilities. Our "Friends of the Conference Fund" of the Southeast Conference is a critical way to support the work of the Southeast Conference, supplementing the giving of our local churches who give through Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM). As the Conference makes decisions for the future, the Fund will help provide the financial stability that is needed. To donate, go to [secucc.org/donate/](https://secucc.org/donate/).

Another option is the United Church of Christ campaign to raise \$50,000 for Medical debt relief. This goal will erase approximately \$5 million dollars of debt. The UCC is partnering with local churches and UCC conferences to address this critical issue. For more information about what has already been done and to make a donation, go to [www.ucc.org](https://www.ucc.org). May we share our thankfulness by sharing our resources!

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## Ordination of Stephanie Milton

The Ordination for Stephanie Milton took place on Sunday, November 17 after worship at First Congregational Church of Atlanta. Present were First Church Members, UCC Clergy, and a host of friends and family. Minister Stephanie Milton's new staff role at First Congregational Church is the Assistant Pastor for College Students and Young Adults. [View more photos on our website.](#)



## Member In Discernment Retreat is Jan 31 & Feb 1

Save the date! The Member in Discernment Retreat will be held January 31st - February 1st in Atlanta. This year the focus of the retreat will be a Mental Health First Aid training led by Dr. Kathryn Bryan, PhD, MDiv.

"Mental Health First Aid is a course that teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training gives you the skills you need to reach out and

provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis." For more information visit <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/about/>.

The cost will be \$80 which includes all the materials for the training, as well as dinner Friday and lunch Saturday. More details and registration coming soon.

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## 2020 Annual Meeting Logo Contest

We are getting excited in the Southeast Conference for our 2020 Annual Meeting in Montgomery Alabama June 19th and 20th with Rev. Traci Blackmon as our Guest. ARE YOU? Here is one way that you can help us get others excited to join us this year to make our Annual Meeting wonderful.

We need you to help us come up with a unique design/logo centered around this year's theme: "Reflecting on Our Past, Focusing on Our Future" (1 Corinthians 12:12). **The deadline to submit your entry is December 17th, 2019 at midnight.** All submissions must be in JPEG format. [Please upload your entry here.](#)

The Annual Meeting Planning Committee will judge the entries in December and the winner will be announced in January.

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## Annual Meeting Youth Explosion

by Gloria Liggins

Our Annual Meeting will be held at Community Congregational Church in beautiful Montgomery, Alabama, on June 19-20, 2020. Our Keynote Speaker will be Rev. Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister of Justice & Local Church Ministries for The United Church of Christ and Senior Pastor of Christ The King United Church of Christ in Florissant, MO. The planning has begun. Tyler Ung, Circular Congregational Church and myself are co-chair for the youth portion of the Annual Meeting.

This annual meeting will include a Youth Explosion. In this historic city of Montgomery, we want to fill the city with our Youth. We want to make this a time for them to get to know each other and experience the UCC as never before but we need your help. We do not want to just bring them here for a meeting. We want to make this an experience that will waken their spirit, encourage their hearts, empower their gifts and inspire them to make a difference. We would like to receive ideas of sessions and gatherings that interest them. We are asking each congregation to present us with one

representative who will gather ideas from your youth and present them to us so that we may bring them to the planning committee. **Please have these names to us as soon as possible.** Please feel free to contact us with questions.

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## Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2019. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

### Week of December 2

- The United Church; Huntsville, Alabama
- Elizabeth Clement
- Lou Kavar
- Rebecca Seldomridge
- Scott Williamson

### Week of December 9

- Sandy Creek UCC; LaFayette, Alabama
- Wendy Coleman
- James Bowman Harris
- Maureen Shelton
- Sonya Williams

## Churches in Transition

Central Congregational, Atlanta, GA; First Congregational, Birmingham AL;

Pilgrimage, Marietta GA; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Peace Church, Clemson SC

## News from the Wider Church

### ONA Churches: Healthy and Growing

ONA churches are healthier and attracting more new members according to a recent article put out by the UCC Open and Affirming Coalition on November 14th. New research from the United Church of Christ shows that on average ONA congregations have more members and healthier finances than non-ONA churches.

"One of the obstacles to congregations hesitating to begin their ONA journey is fear: the fear of losing members and income if the church votes to adopt an ONA covenant," says Andy Lang, the ONA Coalition's Executive Director. "But this latest research shows the opposite is happening: ONA congregations are attracting more members and reporting higher budgets than the UCC average."

This report was released this week by the UCC's Center for Analytics, Research and Data (CARD) and by the Coalition.

[Read the entire report from the Coalition.](#)



### Youth Retreat Registration Open

The Winter Youth Retreat 2020 committee announces a "save the date" of January 17-20, 2020. The presenter this year will be Alicia Crosby. Crosby (she/hers) is a justice educator, activist, and (sometimes reluctant) minister whose work addresses the spiritual, systemic, and interpersonal harm people experience. Nashville-based acoustic-electric duo Ocean Elizabeth

will be the featured band. This year's theme "Love Who? Love How?" will study the passage of 1 John 4:11-12.

Registration is now open for the Blowing Rock Conference Center Winter Youth Retreat 2020. Dates this year are January 17th-20th. Participant fee this year will be \$200 a person. The registration deadline is 12/21/2019. [Go to the registration site](#). There are some changes to the paperless registration to help all. [Contact the committee](#) if you need help with anything. There's a leader packet available for download at the top of the [registration page](#).

More info is on the event Facebook page: [facebook.com/brccwyr/](https://facebook.com/brccwyr/)

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# THE CHRISTMAS FUND

for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

## Christmas Fund Ministerial Assistance Program

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a tangible expression of God's love and light in the world for over 115 years. One of the four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ, the Christmas Fund provides UCC congregations and members an opportunity to reach out in compassion to those who have faithfully shepherded our Church and who now find themselves facing worrisome financial needs.

The United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards, on behalf of the whole church, passes on this direct support so that these needs may be met and our support may be felt. Through your gifts to the Christmas Fund, you can help ensure that "The Light Shines in the Darkness" for those who have so faithfully served our church.

[Download promotional material](#), including a fun kid's coloring book, on the Pension Board website.

## News from our Local Congregations



## Milnes Scholarship Application

The Milnes Fund of Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC, was established in 1996 through a bequest from Jack and Marjory Milnes to provide scholarships for individuals studying to become ministers in the United Church of Christ.

To apply for a scholarship, please submit the following:

1. current *curriculum vita* and
2. cover letter which:
  - a. includes a statement of ministerial philosophy;
  - b. outlines future hopes/plans for ministry in the United Church of Christ;
  - c. describes financial need; and
  - d. provides three references, including one from your pastor.

Award amount may be up to \$3,000. The application should be submitted by December 5, 2019 for the spring semester and should be sent to [Mail@Pilgrim-Church.com](mailto:Mail@Pilgrim-Church.com) in the subject line please put Attn: Milnes Scholarship or via postal mail to Ministry Commission Chair; Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC; 400 Glenwood Drive; Chattanooga, TN

37404; Phone: 423-698-5682. For additional information, you may contact Pilgrim Church.

## Training and Learning Opportunities

### Registration is Open for PATHWAYS 2020 Winter Courses

For inquiries or registration contact [registrar@pathwaystheological.org](mailto:registrar@pathwaystheological.org) or visit [www.pathwaystheological.org](http://www.pathwaystheological.org).

January 8 - February 18, 2020

- L1.8 Pluralism & Religion in North America (6-weeks) \$295
- L2.1 Intro to Spiritual Health (Pastoral Care) (6-weeks) \$295
- L3.4 Contemporary Homiletics (6-weeks) \$295

January 8 - February 4, 2020

- ESC5 Singing the Bible (4-weeks) \$99

Jan. 8 - March 31

- 2.6/2.7 UCC History and Polity (12-weeks) \$595

March 4 - April 14

- L1.9 Ethics & A Life of Meaning (6-weeks) \$295
- L2.3 Small Church Administration (6-weeks) \$295
- L3.6 Professional Boundaries and Ministerial Self-Care (6-weeks) \$295
- L3.7 Contextual Theology (6-weeks) \$295

March 4 - March 31

- ESC1 What About the Bible? (4-weeks) \$99

April 8 - May 5

- ESC13 An Overview of Homosexuality and the Bible (4-weeks) \$99

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### Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders

## (MSTI)

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center is once again offering Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders (MSTI) from March 23-27, 2020. This course is for pastors and other church leaders interested in learning skills to help them deal more effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict. It will be held at Grace Presbyterian Church in Fort Mill, SC (near Charlotte, NC). Please note that those who register no later than February 21, 2020, will receive a \$200 discount off their tuition. For more information please contact the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center at 630-627-0507 or [admin@LMPeaceCenter.org](mailto:admin@LMPeaceCenter.org). To register online please go to <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4316493>.

## Conference Calendar

### **Staff Meeting**

December 3 @ 9:00 am - 10:30 am EST  
Online Virtual Meeting

### **Annual Meeting Planning Session**

December 9 - November 10  
Community Congregational Church, Birmingham AL

### **Board of Directors Meeting**

January 10, 2020 - January 11, 2020

### **Winter Youth Retreat**

January 17, 2020 - January 20, 2020  
Blowing Rock Conference Center, Blowing Rock NC

### **MID Retreat**

January 31, 2020 - February 1, 2020  
Atlanta, GA (location TBD)

### **SEC Clergy Retreat**

March 8-10, 2020  
Monteagle, TN

### **SEC Annual Meeting**

June 19-20, 2020

Montgomery, AL

## National Youth Event

July 22-25, 2020

Purdue University, IN

## Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch;** [cburch@secucc.org](mailto:cburch@secucc.org)

Assoc. Conference Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh;** [hbardole@secucc.org](mailto:hbardole@secucc.org)

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss;** [cmoss@secucc.org](mailto:cmoss@secucc.org)

Director of Communications: **Don Harris;** [dharris@secucc.org](mailto:dharris@secucc.org)

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